



COOL COVER LETTERS

FACILITATOR GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

This 60 – 80 minute session provides an overview of the importance of the cover letter. Practical tips, examples and the benefits of cover letters will be highlighted.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn the purpose and the importance of the cover letter.
2. Students will be able to identify the components of a cover letter.
3. Students will understand the value in researching and using the cover letter as a marketing tool in work search.
4. Students will learn about thank you notes and how to utilize them to compliment the cover letter in the work search process.

MATERIALS

Hand Out 1 – Components of Cover Letters

Hand Out 2 – Do's and Don'ts of Cover Letters

Hand Out 3 – Sample Cover Letter One

Hand Out 4 – Sample Job Ad

Hand Out 5 – Sample Cover Letter Two

Hand Out 6 – How to Grab the Employer's Attention Through Power Statements

Hand Out 7 – Thank You Notes

Website: alis.alberta.ca

Advanced Techniques for Work Search, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

COOL COVER LETTERS

OVERVIEW AND TIMELINES

Introduction – Purpose of a Cover Letter	5 Minutes
Components of a Cover Letter	5 Minutes
Do's and Don'ts of a Cover Letter	5 Minutes
Sample Cover Letter One	10 Minutes
Sample Job Ad	15 Minutes
Sample Cover Letter Two	10 Minutes
How to Grab the Employer's Attention Through Power Statements	5 Minutes
Thank you Notes	5 Minutes

INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE OF A COVER LETTER

What is the purpose of the cover letter?

Top Up List for Facilitators

- It is your marketing tool
- It is the first thing read by an employer
- It takes 20 seconds to make a first impression; you don't get a second chance to create a good first impression
- An introduction to you and your unique combinations of skills, knowledge, abilities and accomplishments as they relate to the job
- A link between your needs, the employer's needs and the demands of the work
- It tells the employer how you can add value to their organization by showing you are different from other applicants
- To encourage the employer to look at your resume
- To grab attention, deliver a powerful message and result in action, i.e. being the interview

When is a covering letter used?

Top Up List for Facilitators

- To accompany a resume or job application form
- To entice the employer to read on
- *Think of the covering letter as the icing and the resume as the cake! Cake is so much better with icing on top!



COOL COVER LETTERS

COMPONENTS OF A COVER LETTER

Exercise suggestion: Give the students 1 minute to brainstorm what information goes into a cover letter.

Distribute Components of a Cover Letter Handout 1 and review with students.

Top Up List for Facilitators

Return Address:

Put your name, address and your postal code. Do not use abbreviations.

Date:

Ensure that the date is included.

Mailing Address:

Put the employer's name, position, business and address. Do not use abbreviations.

Salutation:

Emphasize the importance of researching to find out who to address the letter to and, what his/her position is. Research can be done by checking out the company or the organizations website, phoning to gathering information, talking to people who work there, etc.

Remember to address the person as Dear or Attention Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith or Ms. Smith not on a first name basis such as Dear Kim. Do not use Dear Sir/Madame or To Whom it May Concern. Keep it formal!

Include the competition number if you are applying for a position that specifies one.

Introduction or Opening Paragraph:

Focus on where you found out about the job, or if you want to find out if there are any job opportunities. Show interest and enthusiasm!

Tell the employer what you have to offer and that your resume or application is enclosed.

Body of Letter: *Match the skills, accomplishments, experience and education you have to what the employer is looking for. Explain why you are interested in the position. Provide proof that you are a strong candidate for the position. Emphasize how you can add value to the organization and benefit the employer. Tie this information in to what you know about the organization or company.*

You want to sell yourself and convince the employer of your skills!

Closing:

Remember the goal is to get an interview. Be assertive! Let the employer know that you are available to meet and that you will be following up with him/her.

Use Sincerely, Sincerely Yours or Yours Truly to close the letter followed by a comma. Ensure that you leave 4 or 5 spaces underneath to sign your name in black ink followed by your name in a word processed version.

Enclosure *means that you are also sending a resume or including an application with the cover letter.*



COOL COVER LETTERS

COVER LETTER DO'S AND DON'TS

Exercise Suggestion: Facilitator randomly picks out and reads from the **Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts Handout** asking students to respond with a do or don't.

Distribute **Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts Handout 2**.

Review and discuss if needed.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Distribute **Sample Cover Letter One Handout 3**.

Review and discuss.

SAMPLE JOB AD

Distribute **Sample Job Ad Handout 4**.

Exercise Suggestion: Divide the students into groups. In their groups have them brainstorm what qualities the employer is looking for, how they can back up this information with examples to show what they have to offer, and how can they research or find out about Go Sporting Equipment.

Discuss information generated from the groups.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER TWO

Distribute **Sample Cover Letter Two Handout 5**.

Discuss the format and emphasize the point form highlighting what the employer is looking for and what Katie, the work searcher, has to offer. Ask what cover letter format they prefer and why?

Identify other cover letter resources:

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COOL COVER LETTERS

HOW TO GRAB THE EMPLOYER'S ATTENTION THROUGH POWER STATEMENTS

Refer to **How to Grab the Employer's Attention through Power Statements Handout 6** and again stress the importance of standing out from other candidates.

Exercise Suggestion: Break into partners or groups and encourage students to brainstorm their own power statements. Regroup and discuss.

THANK YOU NOTES

Why are thank you notes important?

Top Up List for Facilitators

Thank you notes are a good way to let people know how much you appreciate their support, help or consideration. It is important to thank people who assist you with your job search by providing information, ideas, job leads, invite you for an interview and agree to supply a verbal or written reference.

Focus on the different ways that thank you notes can be incorporated into work search.

Thank you notes can be done through small cards, stationary or e-mails.

Distribute **Thank You Notes Handout 7**

OPTIONAL IDEA:

Divide students into groups and encourage them to brainstorm and come up with a creative occupation.

Once this is done, encourage them to design their own cover letter for the occupation they have chosen and share with the whole group!



COMPONENTS OF A COVER LETTER

Your Name/Address:

Date:

Employer's Name /Position/Business and Address:

Salutation: (Dear or Attention Mr., Mrs., Ms.)

Introduction: Be creative and grab the employer's attention!

- State where you saw the job advertised or whether you are inquiring about work.
- Show your enthusiasm for the position.
- Link education, experience and skills to the needs of the employer.
- State that your resume/application is enclosed or attached.

Body: Sell yourself and impress your employer.

- State what the employer is looking for, what you are doing, why you are a suitable candidate. Focus on your skills, strengths, class projects, work experience, courses, part time work, volunteer work and accomplishments. Show how you will add value to the organization and what makes you different from other applicants.
- Let your letter reflect your personality.
- What do you know about the organization/company? Did you do your research? Tie this information in.

*Try not to repeat the information that is already in your resume.

Closing: Set up an interview.

- Try to set up an interview by stating your availability and how you can be reached.
- Be proactive by stating what you will do for a follow-up.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name typed

Enclosure



COVER LETTERS DO'S AND DON'TS

The Do's:

- ✓ Write to someone in particular
- ✓ Mention where you saw the job advertised
- ✓ Ask what you can do for the company, not what the company can do for you!
- ✓ Emphasize the employer's requirements/your skills/accomplishments
- ✓ Close with an action statement
- ✓ Make sure that your name, phone number and address are in your cover letter in case it gets separated from your resume
- ✓ Date your letter
- ✓ Paperclip your letter to your resume
- ✓ Keep your letter to one page, brief and to the point (KISS – Keep it short and simple)
- ✓ Accent the positive, highlight what skills/qualifications you can offer, not what you hope to gain from the employer
- ✓ Take initiative and be proactive by asking for an interview
- ✓ Project warmth and enthusiasm
- ✓ Proofread and send the original - keep copies for your portfolio
- ✓ Create a computer processed letter unless a handwritten one is requested
- ✓ Grab your employer's attention
- ✓ Sign your letter
- ✓ Use the same font as you use on your resume
- ✓ Use clean, quality stationery, the same as your resume

The Don'ts:

- X Send a generic letter
- X Spell recipient's name wrong or use the wrong title, address, etc.
- X Repeat all the same information that is in your resume
- X Overuse the pronoun 'I'
- X Fold the letter
- X Use false information
- X Use abbreviations
- X Have any spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors
- X Make the letter too long, keep it from 3 to 5 paragraphs
- X Forget to sign cover letter
- X Be demanding, arrogant or show desperation
- X Forget to follow up with a phone call



SAMPLE COVER LETTER ONE

Kim Wagner
5334 High River Drive
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 0L8

January 9, 2009

Mr. Ted Brown
Manager
Ted's Grocery Store
345 Right Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4P 0Y4

Dear Mr. Brown:

Are you looking for a dedicated young person for the Grocery Attendant Position you advertised on the Sider View High School job board? I would like to be considered for this exciting opportunity! I have attached a copy of my resume and application.

Being a regular customer at Ted's Grocery Store, I have always been impressed with the customer service that I have received. It is my understanding that your store has been in the community for 10 years and that service is extremely important to you. Having worked at a restaurant as a waiter for 3 years, I know the importance of putting your customers first. I am friendly, outgoing and hard working and know that these qualities would be a great addition to your team. I am a responsible student and have always been able to successfully juggle my work with my school studies.

I would like the opportunity to set up an interview to further discuss my qualifications. I can be reached at (403) 456-6789. I will call you in the next 3 to 4 days to ensure that you have received my resume.

Sincerely,

Kim Wagner

Kim Wagner

Enclosure



JOB AD SAMPLE



We Are Looking For You!

Do you enjoy sports?

Are you actively involved in physical activity?

Is fitness part of your life?

Do you like being part of a team?

Are you a team player?

Then you need to join Go Sporting Equipment

We are looking for

customer service oriented team players!

Please note job number 300987

Check us out by emailing your resume to

jobs@gosportingequipment or

faxing it to 403-392-3118.



SAMPLE COVER LETTER TWO

Katie Skateway
4567 Running Way Drive
Red Deer Alberta T4M 0P6

May 7, 2009

Mr. Paul Fitness
Manager
Go Sporting Equipment
70 Ballpark Crescent
Red Deer, Alberta T5P 0Q5

Re: Job Ad Number 300987

Dear Mr. Fitness:

If you are interested in hiring someone who is athletic, energetic and displays good communication skills, then please consider me for the Customer Service position. In response to your advertisement dated May 3, 2009 in the Red Deer Advocate, I am forwarding my resume. My skills and qualifications have been highlighted as they relate to your stated requirements:

Your Requirements:

Someone who:

- enjoys sports and fitness
- is involved in sports
- likes being part of a team environment
- is customer service oriented
- is knowledgeable about the sports industry

My Qualifications:

- demonstrated keen interest in sports and fitness
- actively involved in soccer, hockey and cycling
- recognized as Most Valuable Player in Hockey and Top Physical Education 10 Student
- extensive volunteer experience - Volunteer Assistant Coach for U10 Soccer Club
- experience working in several team oriented environments in retail and restaurant industry

In addition, I am an individual who has a passion for health and fitness. I am a fast learner who would be a great asset to your team.

I would welcome the opportunity for a personal interview to further discuss my qualifications. I will call you in the next 7 to 10 days to ensure you have received my resume and to answer any questions regarding it. In the meantime, I can be reached at home (403) 345-6789 or on my cell (403) 567-6789.

Sincerely,

Katie Skateway

Katie Skateway

Enclosures



HOW TO GRAB THE EMPLOYER'S ATTENTION THROUGH POWER STATEMENTS

- I am confident that my abilities will make me a valuable contribution to your organization/company.
- Please consider my qualifications for the position that you have advertised.
- Your advertisement grabbed my attention.
- I look forward to meeting with you and will give you a call to follow-up this letter the week of May 20, 2009.
- I will call you in the next 7 to 10 days to ensure that you have received my resume and to answer any questions you may have.
- I believe that my skills and experience will be an asset to your company/organization.

Now come up with at least 2 others!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Thank You Notes

May 20, 2009

Dear Mr. Fitness:

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your company and the customer service position. The opportunity provided me with a good understanding of your business.

I am more excited than ever after this meeting. I really believe that I would be a strong addition to your company and team!

Thanks again!

Best regards,

Katie Skatway

Katie Skatway